


1 9 8 9



The Creative Impulse



Massachusetts College of Art



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025 with funding from
Boston Public Library

https://archive.org/details/creativeimpulse1989unse_0



This is the fifth issue of *The Creative Impulse*, a compilation of creative writing by our students. We take for granted their visual talents. Here we have an opportunity to see their verbal talents and literary interests.

We are grateful for the support of Paul McCaffrey, Vice-President of Student Affairs, Virginia Allen, Chairperson of Critical Studies, and Al Gowan, Professor of Design.

Lila Chalpin
Professor of Literature and Film

Marching Band Man

Marching Band Man
Runs a crew of 250
A deep voice commands
All to a silent attention
Marktime march!

Spirals and forms spread
Throughout the field
Memorized notes play
Perfectly, of course

Some days we are in sync
Other days we fall out
We all hear the same tap cadence

Hours of rehearsal
Lost weekends
Some drop out
Others like the winning

Especially MARCHING BAND MAN!

Catherine Jandrue

Deeper And Deeper

My soul lies
buried deep

in my painting,
no one will ever find it.

Look for it closely,
but don't be disappointed.

I will give of myself,
and may be rewarded.

There I hide from the people,
the pressure...

The routine shoots a chill
through my body and mind.

I flinch,
sometimes I return.

Other times, I fall in the depths.

Maureen DeSisto

Chipwich or Curse Poem

You wouldn't eat it
or speak words
enough to
let me know

it was

 melting.

It was I

was melting

from you

let it

without words

melt away

a pool of nothing

cigarette t.v. glow

hum hum

hum

nothing words

no words

Vanna turns letters

"Give me an F, Pat."

"I'd like to buy a vowel.

a U, please."

it

was

melting

Emily Evans

Father

January. A cold, clear night. Snow blankets the forest floor, throwing a pale light upward. The dogs dart in and out of the shadows. Our shoes squeak in the snow, breath lingers in the air wreathing our heads, my father's and mine, like misty scarves. Beads of frost form on our eyelashes. Smoke from a nearby hearthfire drifts through the moonless dark like a memory. I sniff: an agreeable smell, I think of relaxed shoulders and a comfortable chair. He smells the smoke: it smells of terror and annihilation. His eyes close. A moan, deep and involuntary, comes from his belly.

"What's wrong", I ask.

He opened his eyes. It was dark. Snow dimly lit the ground, his stiff fingers and stiff legs moved in trepidation. The fighting had been going on for days. Keep your head down. Using a radio, he tried calling to the unit ahead of him, where the noise of rifles and rockets had been loudest hours earlier. No one answered. Silence crackled on the radio, silence like a troubled sweep. The snow squeaked under his feet. Smoke from the villages drifted through the trees; he stepped on something. Bending over, he could barely perceive: a nose. A dead man's nose was poking up through the snow. He smelled the smoke. He was burning.

Memory arched like lightning. Time became a single instant. An instant later, the spell is broken; time snaps back into place, distance is restored. It was only a second, a heartbeat, an eternity, a dead moment. They say that smell has the strongest memory. My father recovers himself: "This is Minnesota, not Belgium. I am a teacher, not a soldier. I am 54, not 22."

I watch him in the soft light. "Where was I?" he asks, as we resume our journey.


Jon Gottshall





Counter-Everything

Seasoned friend
let my joke fall away

 There is art in talking
breath of wordiness

Still, night time creeps on
the phone, still

Your white supremacist rationale
chokes those with **call waiting**

Patronize my righteousness
with no willing choice

Comfort me in the arms of your
mother's, uncle's, sister's, lover's son

I am **love-proof**
and that's all.

TJ Norris

The Hands

"Hey c'mon!"

The yellow beam of the flashlight had tilted upward towards the top of the engine block as my mind drifted. I felt small and nervous. I shouldn't be letting him down. How hard was it to just keep the light where he wanted it? Beads of sweat hung on my father's brow. His eyes were fierce. He leaned right into the dark mass despite the powerful roar of the pistons. Somehow he knew the secret to this engine's workings. He would soon be its master.

With sweaty palms I held the light firmly, aiming at the area where his hands did the work. To avoid casting shadows I carefully adjusted the beam according to his movements. But I became so focused upon what I saw in that circle of light that I was constantly in danger of losing attention. Those hands that were full of mechanical understanding; those grease-covered fingers playing delicately with the adjusting screws and arms of the pounding metal. I pressed my chest against the vibrating fender for support.

In the intensity of my stare, the actual tools that my father grasped dissolved. They were replaced by pieces of pine that he carefully measured, marked, and cut. The raw wood was smoothed and rounded, shaped into new homes for our sweaters and books. Those same hands extended electrical wires into far-off corners of our house and skillfully pruned crabapple trees that had gone untended for years before we moved to this place. I caught myself just as the light was about to slip again to some unnecessary spot.

We had lunch alone. My mother and sister hadn't returned yet. My father was different now, friendlier. He made one of his strange Saturday sandwiches—bologna, cheese, and peanut butter all together. The Red Sox were on television, but neither of us paid close attention. My father ate quickly. He chewed loudly and breathed through his nose.

"When will Mom and Sue be back?"

"Pretty soon. Their flight was due in at one."

Uncle Frank, my mother's brother had died a week earlier. I came into the dark family room that grey afternoon sweaty from my paper route. My mother was standing beside her ironing board. She looked at me sadly. For a moment only the soft hollow laughter of a game show and the television's flickering glow lived in that room.

I rinsed our dishes and put them in the dishwasher. Beside me, my father ran his hand lightly over a cupboard door. He opened it and studied the edge, again using his sense of touch as much as his eye.

"Maybe I'll work on these a little more."

I left the kitchen. My father didn't really need my help stripping the cabinets. I didn't feel like watching him.

In my bedroom I lay on my bed and looked at a book of paintings by Van Gogh. My mother had bought it recently at the supermarket. I'd looked at this book many times, never tiring of its wonderful images. But I was restless. It was too nice outside to be lying in my room and the solvent my father was using in the kitchen bothered me even on the second floor.

I went outside to explore the wild corner of our yard. This was an uncut field with prickly bushes, fruit trees, and old stone walls. I climbed a pear tree that had somehow been half-uprooted many years earlier. It now grew at an extreme angle. Lying back against the slanted trunk I decided that this would be a good place to build a platform. I had a view through the branches all the way to the street. One corner of our house was visible and above it a big expanse of sky. Everything else was greenness and filtered light. I close my eyes. But soon I heard a car. My mother and sister were home.

My mother and father and I stood in the kitchen, each with our backs to a different counter. I could hear my sister in the upstairs bathroom. My mother continued her story about the funeral. She seemed calm, but fragile. As she reached the point where she described the service and Uncle Frank in his open coffin in the center aisle of the church, she lost her self-control.

"He was just so young...still so young.."

She trembled and raised a clenched fist to her lowered chin. With her other arm she gripped herself across her stomach. She sobbed in her pain and impotence. That moment was terrible to me.

I felt a tremendous confusion and looked angrily towards my father. Why didn't he move?! Why didn't he help her?! He looked at her, then lowered his head, his hands behind him gripping the counter top. We remained fixed, like the points of a set triangle unable to alter our positions no matter how much pain and need was expressed. I glared at my father, but I too was frozen. My hate flooded over myself as well. Yes, he was her husband, and I only her son. But I knew that I was just like him in this failure.

Tony Loretta

My last four years

sounded like a song
starting loft, uneasy
quiet chimes, somber violins

soon after, drums beat
steady rhythm
second verse a warm brook

third chorus started
the drummer quit
band unmeshed

my song had to continue
new band hired
stanza four harmony

as the score
came to its final note
a diploma in hand

D. Bloomquist

My Place

You're all invited to my place
the light's burned out at the top of the stairs
the neighbors never take out their garbage

Come on over to my place
the cat is choking on a furball
the vacuum cleaner broke last month

Stop by my place
the toilet's clogged again
the kitchen sink overflowed

Give me a ring at my place
the freezer door is frozen shut
the milk is three weeks old

It's easy to get to my place
the landlord won't answer the phone
the couple upstairs is fighting again

You better not come to my place...

Jennifer Burdick



Popcorn for Dinner

“How can you possibly eat popcorn for dinner?” through the long-distance call I saw mother’s face upset.

“Don’t worry, Mom. This is the part of American’s life and culture.”

Since I came here I always eat junk food for lunch or dinner. Sometimes, raisins are my whole days meal. I know I should manage my life in a way that parents all expect their child to have, and that is in good health. But here I can do whatever I want to do when I’m alone. No one will bother me.

In my case, to be alone is to be free. Life isn’t easy for me here. All my pure pleasures often come from being totally alone. As a foreigner, a woman and a student, I get more acquainted with myself when I’m alone. In fact, the speed of life is super fast in the United States. I must speed up to catch classes and learn. I really need most evenings to digest whatever I’ve learned or heard during the day.

However, I have had very serious culture-shock for a long time. By coincidence, my brother had a chance to visit me in Boston with a Chinese business delegation in 1985. On the day he was leaving, I cried like a poor little girl. He hugged me tightly and convinced me: “If you miss home that much, you should come home with me today!” Suddenly, my tears were gone. I pushed him away and told him: “Although I can’t stop missing home, I’m not going with you because I love to be alone.”

From then on, I knew I was young enough to dare the venture alone and mature enough to make it work. Especially, if I succeed I may pay for it with tears and fears but I know I will enjoy it all my life.

Xiao-Jun Hu

I waited for you today
sitting alone
amid an onslaught
of murmurs,

sipping tea,
carelessly burning my lips,

anticipating
the smell of your cigarette.

A casual "hello"
would have been enough.

You weren't there.

You weren't expecting me.

Still,
the cafe seemed
a more somber place
without you.

Pamela Schwartz



Reflection Alone

No one has ever found my meadow, buzzing
and still silent
Boundless walls the warmth touches trickles inwards.
Whisper light willows of wheat on my crown hasten
to leave, but still I shine.
Step out and away from my place, bronzed confidence
won't shield the cold snap of reflections in the ice.
Still I ride my mind, it serpentines through
corridors not yet filled with paint and pencil.
What skinny limbs, not brittle branches
hold me up and carry a love, dry like sun
bleached bone into the next room.
I'm dizzy with my dream, I'm busy with the
bridge I'm building to the other side.
No more superficial tricks up my sleeve.
I forge my desire from a rusty nail, seasoned
in a melting pot of trial and error.
The gentle beast, the hungry child clutch
my throat and choke my heart.
I'm drowning in a painful and beautiful
compassion that I can call mine.

George A. Selleck

Alone

alone alone in the street alone alone everywhere
alone alone in the subway alone alone in the train
alone alone in the apartment alone full of people
alone nobody touches anybody alone nobody listens
to anybody alone an old man tries to speak to somebody
alone nobody listens alone a baby cries alone
nobody cares alone no one looks at me alone
no one touches me alone no one listens to me
alone I don't care alone that's good alone
sometimes alone makes you think alone try to
speak alone go ahead alone no one listens

Nayda Collazo

Loneliness

Back and forth, back and forth, back and... Wavering like a pendulum, hanging from an empty sky. It is not black, not white, but rather grey, a fuzzy grey. The grey like the color of a lintball from a dryer. I squeeze the air but there is no response. I call up and no one answers, I call down. There isn't a sound; sideways, backwards, forwards, perpendicular, acute, no one says a word. The corners of the room are getting smaller but the floor and ceiling are getting larger, in fact immense. There's not a single being around for lightyears. What if the room compresses so much that I am flattened? No one would come to a flat woman's funeral.

The moon is dull and not whole. Suspended by the thickness of the mass we call the Universe, the moon lingers on. The stars copulate with each other to form other beings. Silence emanates from a hollow bang. It vibrates through my body. Anxiety rushes through my veins. A calm sadness overcomes the anxiety.

...forth, back and forth, back and forth, and back.

Elizabeth Rorke



Van Gogh/The Potato Eaters (Five Voices At Supper)

First

In the evening
strong smell of malt coffee
hands embedded with soil
I pour five cups full

Second

Holding my hot drink
light of one candle flickering
soft on the small cup
I raise it to my open mouth

Third

Chill in the room
moist steam curls
up from the potato plate
I fork their soft whiteness

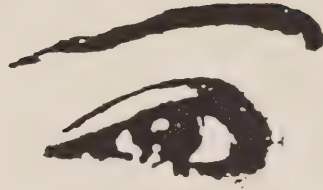
Fourth

A long sun gone down
midnight by the clock
barely seeing
my eyes open dreaming

Fifth

Held by tiny rooms
walls dimmed by dark
standing close by the table
my face is warmed by the four

Midge Battelle



A Good Woman

Her limbs ache as she rises from her trance
Eyes blossom, but to see the body fade
Like wind, she fights to breathe her final dance

Her beauty hidden in a dark romance
of promises and songs meant to evade
Her limbs ache as she rises from her trance

Though withered, she attempts to hold her stance
against a bleak storm no god could have made
Like wind, she fights to breathe her final dance

Her hands create, thus her mind to enhance
and crafts a world without the poisoned blade
Her life aches as she rises from her trance

She beckons the fair maiden moon advance
and calls an ancient goddess to her aid
Like wind she fights to breathe her final dance

In her last hour who will take the chance
and sleep by her side this good woman frayed
Her limbs ache as she rises from her trance
Like wind she fights to breathe her final dance

Thomas E. Diamond

Critical-Paranoic Inversion Of Sanity/(War)

Here lies the melting
twilight here lie snakes
writhing amongst the gaping maws of skulls
skulls duplicating upon themselves Agony
and desolation
reside on this plane
of mute browns and ochre
cast upon our graves to seal in the slain
heroes of the forgotten future.
Burnt skin stretches a frozen mask
across bleached bone lain too long
in the unforgiving sun desolate fear
is etched deep on lidless eyes
sparkles of hatred and anger glint their
own menace to the waiting
audience. Here lie sorrow and pain
of fatherless whelps and homeless nations '
here lie courage, valor, honor
blasphemy.
Here lies Beelzebub
Here lie the flies.

Glenn Grillo



Van Gogh's Sunflowers

glowing gold
releasing in the sun
they absorbed.

Trapped in a vase
indoors
They don't know where to look.

Three stand tall
with round heads
looking on their
neighbors
glowing
golden.

Claire Provenchar

New York, New York

Eight months ago in New York seemed like eight years. Veretta's tragic divorce made my unhappiness seem trivial. Although Veretta was my friend she was also my boss, and I didn't want to trouble her with my small problems.

I didn't notice when the billboards in Times Square changed advertisements. I didn't hear when passing cars beeped. Even when Pat's letter came saying that he needed space to see other people, I had no reaction. The letter was a little tough to take only because it came three days after a letter that had said he loved me and wanted to marry me. I gave him credit for being honest and went out with Scott the following Saturday. Scott was a nice guy but nothing more.

As summer set in, the hums along Ninth Avenue seemed to multiply.

"Hey, Sweetness! Here she is this morning. A little late today, Sweetness? Where's that smile? Look at those legs!" I choked on their smell as well as their words.

Sugar was like a drug. After two candy bars I was ready to open the photography studio. The phone would ring at 9 o'clock sharp.

"Hi Judy. It's Veretta. I'm going to be late."

Two minutes later the phone would ring again.

"Where are my pictures? They were supposed to be here at 9:00am! I need the pictures now! I have salesmen going to California..."

I used to put the phone down and walk away. And, of course, don't forget the daily call from Vinnie.

"Hello, Judy, this is Vinnie Lorenzo from Imaging Dynamics. You guys owe \$1,273.52. You know that, right? Thanks, you're a doll. I can tell you're a doll. Judy, I'll tell you what. I'll forget all the money if you go out with me Friday night. Seriously! C'mon, we'll fly to Paris for dinner. Would you like that? We can visit your family in Boston. Oh you're such a doll. I'm gonna come down there and see you. Will you have lunch with me at least? I'm telling you, Judy, I'll make you the happiest girl in the world.

At 5:30pm I would drag my camera along the same route.

"Hey, Sweetness. You have a good night now. Want an apple?" I grabbed the usual pint of Haagen Daas and plopped into bed. The traffic outside the apartment was background music. After a two hour nap I would start to go through the closet. One particular night I settled for the white-fitted dress. It buttoned down the back and even made my white skin appear to have some color. Promptly at 9:00pm I punched in at Asuka, a Japanese restaurant-piano bar. Once I had punched in at 9pm, and I brought my time card to Mr. Kiso.

"Look" I said, "Will you pay me from 9 o'clock on?"

"No. We only pay 9:30."

I left the restaurant and walked around 45th Street and Fifth Avenue. After an hour I returned, fuming on the inside, but smiling on the outside.

This night, however, I ran down 45th Street to avoid the irritation of being one minute late. Upstairs the other hostesses were putting on lipstick. The smell of perfume drifted down the hallway. Karli's voice could be heard all the way downstairs.

"Franny, could you believe how much coke Ace was doing last night? God! It was unreal!"

The dim piano bar was empty except for Mishio, the Maitre d'.

"Hello, Judy-San," He said, "not feeling well tonight?"

"No, I'm fine," I lied.

"Oh good." He was a sincere person. He did a watercolor portrait of me that I still hang on my wall.

Around the corner the other hostesses were chatting. Astrid lit up a cigarette.

"hi Judy. You look nice."

"Thanks," I said as I pulled up a chair to her table. Gita walked in. She was a beautiful blond from Holland.

"Gita-Sam," Astrid said, "Ready for the Japs tonight?" Everyone chuckled.

"Yeah, if I hear another Japanese accent singing 'New York, New York' I'm going to spill scotch and soda all over it" Karli added.

Gita sat down next to me.

"Hi, Judy," she said without looking up and lit a cigarette.

"Hi, Gita."

The smoke filled the room, stinging my eyes and throat. The piano music began and Japanese businessmen from all over the world sauntered in. One hundred dollars a head just to walk in and drink scotch and soda.

"Ah, this American," they pointed at me, "I wish she were Japanese! Mishi-San, have her wait on us."

I'm really not a good actress. It wouldn't have taken much insight to see that I hated every minute of serving them.

Around 1:00am business slowed down. I punched out at 2:00, later than usual. The walk home would provide time to wind down. It was cool outside. The street was empty. My heels echoed down 45th Street as I headed toward Fifth Ave. Suddenly, a short black man appeared beside me.

"Miss, I'm hungry."

"Here." I had just stolen a handfull of mints and held them out to him...He slapped them away.

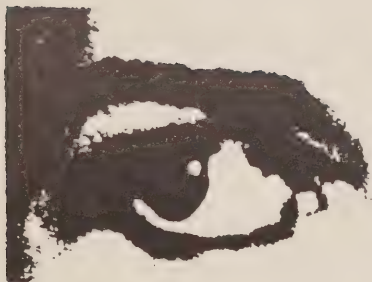
"No, you don't understand. I'm hungry!" He grabbed my arm.

Breathing was suddenly more difficult than it had been a moment before. I couldn't overcome the thought that I wasn't strong enough to get away. Two forms appeared around the corner. I screamed. Two boys dressed for their high school prom had taken a wrong turn. They ran to my assistance. With a little force they sent the man running.

Sometime during that sleepless night I answered my own questions. "I don't want to be here anymore. I'm leaving."

As soon as I said it, it was done. Veretta would find another assistant, Vinnie would find someone else to take to Paris, and the Japanese businessmen would find another hostess. In another year it won't seem so bad.

Judith Neenan



Impresario La Musica

A single tone
begins a work
complex as
adolescent emotion
distilled to pure
essence of all.
The battered page holds
the same notes
as other composers'
unique in your arrangement.
Down beat, deep breath
my voice like a bow
on silken strings
which wrap the hearts
of thousands past.
Connected to you
they stretch beyond
to some primordial pod.
The notes are like
a lover's touch
the excitement of one lingers
as others find their spot.

Alex Jaeger

I'm with you in Courtlandt
Merrin, even now fifteen years later, you are beside me.
I'm with you in Courtlandt
We rode bikes, you smiled, I laughed and followed.
I'm with you in Courtlandt
I'll never forget you, your look, your innocence.
I'm with you in Courtlandt
The first dance of life had just begun.
I'm with you in Courtlandt
The terrible news, how I dreaded those unthinkable words.
I'm with you in Courtlandt
You had passed away early that afternoon.
I'm with you in Courtlandt
The next day I watched the sky to see your soul rise to heaven.
I'm with you in Courtlandt.

Joshua Bath

The Silence

We four share wine and laughter
the game set before us
each having found a new partner
You and I no longer a pair

I am with you in silence
this silence where our hunger grows

She raises the goblet
her lips wetted, relishing the shine
of the liquid's red droplets
I try to see, feel those lips press yours

I am with you in silence
where our silence grows

The rose engraved on your arm
dredges memories:
I compare the line of her neck curve of her breast
to mine

I am with you in silence
where our hunger grows

Fearful to glance too long
your black eyes
pierce my wanting

I am with you in silence
where our silence grows

Almitra Stanley

Acne

Like footprints
On my face

A trampled field
Of battles lost

Scars reveal
My inner wounds

Slow to heal
Raw to touch

Willy Slotnik



We know what we are, but know not what we may be.

Shakespeare



